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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT HASHIMI ON NATIONAL GOVERNANCE,
LEGISLATION, AND MOSUL

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (S) During a February 21 meeting, the Ambassador and Vice President Tareq al-Hashimi reviewed the status of Provincial Powers legislation, the Executive Council, Mosul, and Kurdish issues. Responding to the Ambassador's request to help pressure Vice President Adel Abdel Mehdi to avoid vetoing a draft provincial powers law, Hashimi doubted his influence over Mehdi on this issue. On the most recent Executive Council meeting, Hashimi complained that PM Maliki was "playing games" with nominations for senior GOI positions, with the Tawafuq Front's return to government, and with power-sharing generally. The PM, he said, had made an ultimatum to Tawafuq: either join the cabinet, or Tawafuq's seats will be filled with technocrats of the PM's choosing. Hashimi said he would soon visit Mosul in Ninewa Province and review the situation there ahead of an expected military operation against Al Qaida. Hashimi also hoped to talk with KRG President Barzani to review Article 140 issues and to help defuse growing tensions with Turkey. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) The Vice President was joined for the 60-minute meeting at his IZ residence by his Chief of Staff and his Political Advisor Dr. Khalil Azzawi. The Ambassador was accompanied by Special Assistant and Poloff (note-taker).

Status of Legislation

¶3. (S) Vice President Hashimi told the Ambassador during a February 21 meeting that he believed provincial elections would help correct sectarian "imbalances" existent in provinces like Anbar and Ninewa. With local elections held by October 1, as mandated in a law passed February 13 by Parliament, the quality of local governance would surely improve. Vice President Adel Abdel Mehdi, however, was threatening to veto the law and accused PM Maliki's allies of adding unacceptable language to the bill at the last minute. The Ambassador said he had urged Abdel Mehdi in their last meeting to sign the bill, or allow it to pass by taking no action (as Hashimi had done with the Accountability and Justice Law). The law, the Ambassador told him, appeared to strike a reasonable balance between central and provincial powers, including on the issue of firing a provincial governor -- an issue of particular concern to Abdel Mehdi and the Supreme Council. Asked to apply pressure on Abdel Mehdi to pass the law, Hashimi agreed with the Ambassador's views on the benefits of the legislation, but said he had "few cards to play" in terms of his ability to persuade Abdel Mehdi on the issue.

¶4. (S) Remaining on the topic of provincial elections, Hashimi said the GOI and UN must agree on plans to address

voting by refugees and internally-displaced persons (IDPs) -- particularly in "imbalanced" Baghdad. Perhaps, he added, the GOI needed to press Iraqi families to return to their homes, regardless of any misgivings by the UN. Asked if the GOI had formed a group or committee to review such issues in light of expected provincial elections, Hashimi replied "the UN is looking at it."

Executive Council Meeting

15. (S) After confirming Hashimi's participation in the Executive Council (Ex-Co) meeting of February 20, the Ambassador asked about efforts by the Council to agree on nominations for senior GOI positions. Hashimi said Maliki had promised to share with him a list of Ambassadorial nominations, but that the PM failed to follow through with the names. Similarly frustrating, he continued, the PM's office circulated a name list to fill 37 deputy minister positions in the GOI, "only 3 of which" were apportioned to the Tawafuq Front. Of four Iraqi Army deputy chief of staff slots, he said, none were Sunni ("3 Shia, 1 Kurd"). A paper from Hashimi detailing ideas for assuring Ex-Co progress on its by-laws and a "road-map" went unanswered by the PM, he said. Maliki reportedly refused to sign any paper from Hashimi, telling him that he would only sign once "results" were achieved. Asked his views on Maliki's approach, the Ambassador told Hashimi that "results" were indeed important and that Hashimi should return to government to contribute to efforts to improve service delivery and governance.

Tawafuq Return, New Cabinet

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16. (S) Asked whether the Tawafuq Coalition of Sunni parties would return to government, Hashimi again complained about Maliki's refusal to share responsibility for decision-making with the three Presidency Council members. The Prime Minister, he said, provided an ultimatum at the last Executive Council meeting: either return Tawafuq's six ministers to the Cabinet or a new, technocratic government will be formed without Tawafuq's participation. Hashimi said he met with Maliki the day before the Ex-Co meeting for four hours, but did not reach a final agreement. The PM, he said, agreed to talk but refused to put anything in writing. Hashimi said the PM told him that if Tawafuq did not provide its list of cabinet minister nominees, he would select from names provided by Parliament when the body reconvenes on March 18. Hashimi concluded the discussion by posing hypothetical questions on whether Tawafuq's return would change the sectarian agenda of the Maliki government. He recounted how a group of faculty from the University of Baghdad's Faculty of Dentistry had been kidnapped and interrogated a day earlier by order of the Prime Minister's Office. The PM's Chief of Staff, he said, denied any knowledge of the incident, and Chief Judge Medhat and the Judiciary were "powerless" to confront the executive branch on such issues.

Mosul Visit, Kurdish Issues

17. (S) Hashimi said he would travel to Mosul on February 23-24, during which time he intended to meet with local leaders, Iraqi Islamic Party members, and tour the site of two late-January bombings in the western part of the city that killed the Provincial Police Chief and many others. Hashimi said he would also talk with local Kurdish officials during the visit about the IIP's December agreement with the two major Kurdish political parties (KDP and PUK). In particular, he said, a dialogue between the GOI in Baghdad

and Massoud Barzani was required. The Ambassador noted an upcoming visit to Baghdad of Nechirvan Barzani, who was prepared to discuss a wide range of issues with Hashimi and others. Pointing to Article 140-related territorial disputes, Hashimi said it would be very beneficial to have the UN talk with Iraqi political leaders to "mitigate tensions" and to offer technical assistance. Hashimi noted his concern over increasing strains along the Iraq-Turkey border, and believed the GOT was coming under severe pressure from the Turkish military to act more aggressively to confront the PKK. Hashimi hoped to meet with senior Turkish officials during an Organization of the Islamic Conference meeting on March 16 in Dakar, Senegal.

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